



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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SERVICE ISSUES FINAL 1994-95 WATERFOWL HUNTING REGULATIONS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued final frameworks for the 1994-95 waterfowl season offering states an option of an increased daily bag limit for ducks or a longer season.

The Service also authorized a hunting season on canvasback ducks in the Atlantic, Central, and Mississippi flyways for the first time since the 1985-86 season and extended season frameworks for certain goose and brant populations.

Under the first option, states may increase the daily bag limits from three to four ducks in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central flyways, and from four to five ducks in the Pacific Flyway. The length of the duck hunting season would stay the same as last year.

Under the second option, states may increase the length of duck hunting season by 10 days, but bag limits would remain the same as last year--three ducks in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central flyways, and four ducks in the Pacific Flyway.

Data collected by the Service show that 40 states selected the longer season, while 8 states opted for the increased daily bag limit.

The Service liberalized the hunting regulations in response to a 24-percent increase in duck breeding populations in traditional survey areas to 32.5 million ducks and a 20-percent increase in the anticipated fall flight to 71 million ducks.

The upswing came after more than a decade of declining or stable duck populations resulting from a long drought and widespread loss of wetland habitat.

This year's fall flight forecast is the highest since the 1983 prediction of 72 million. The index hit a record low of 55 million ducks in 1985.

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Biologists attribute the population rebound to wetter weather conditions and extensive programs to restore vital wetland and upland habitat. These programs include the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the Conservation Reserve Program, and projects undertaken by organizations such as Ducks Unlimited.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan, for example, has protected, restored, or enhanced more than 2 million acres of wetlands since 1986. In addition, private lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program have provided millions of acres of upland habitat for waterfowl and other species. Final regulations for this year's waterfowl hunting seasons were published in the September 27, 1994, Federal Register.

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